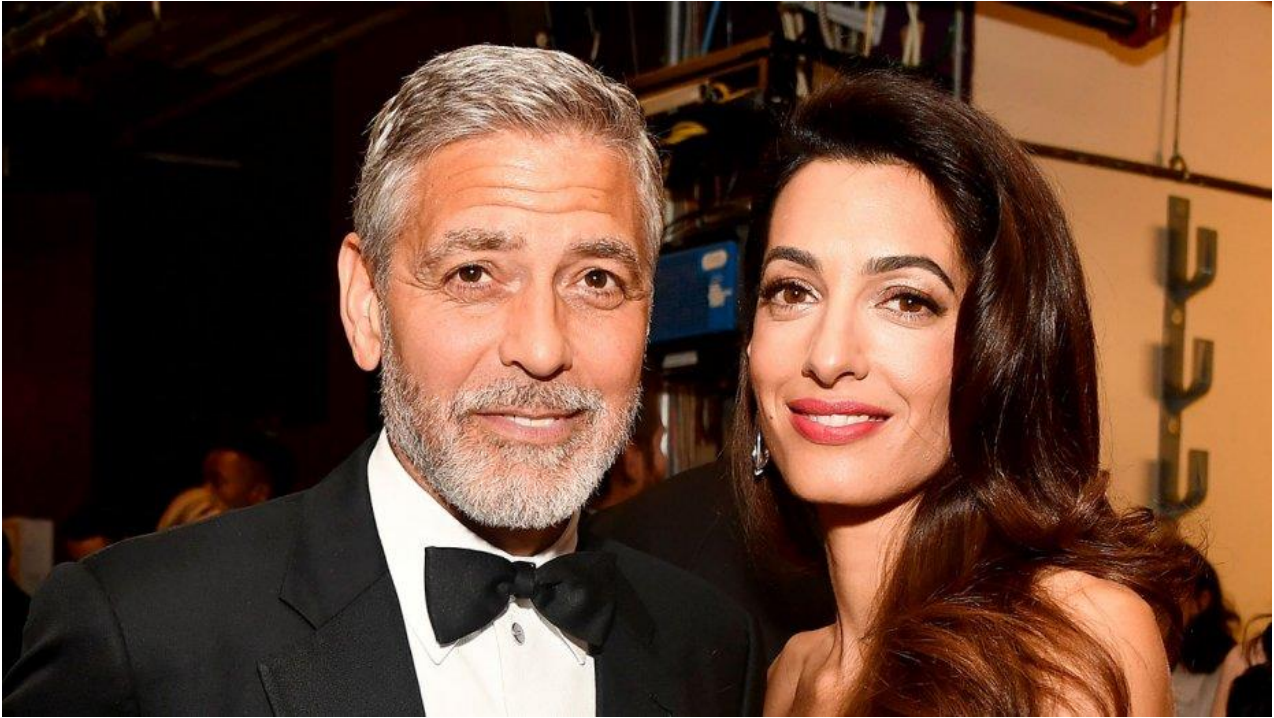


How A-Listers Summer in Lake Como

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Frazer Harrison/Getty Images

George and Amal Clooney at the AFI Lifetime Achievement Awards

George Clooney isn't the only boldfacer who summers on Italy's illustrious shore.

In Italy and in America, Lake Como is synonymous with George Clooney. Since 2002, the TV-turned-movie star has been a summer resident of the verdant, deep lake, the beauty of which is impossible to grasp until you feel it in person. But while everyone around Lake Como—a collection of charming tiny towns and the bigger lively yet provincial “city” of Como—has undoubtedly spotted the beloved Clooney, interacted with him, or knows where his villa sits (surprisingly right beside a public pier!), he’s far from the only famous face around. The lake attracts an attractive who’s who from Hollywood and Silicon Valley for what amounts to serious relaxation. If following the advice of the luxury tour company [Access Italy](#), which regularly works with a clientele of the caliber of (and including) Oprah Winfrey, Ben Stiller, Penelope Cruz, Aaron Paul and Owen Wilson, it’s the place to go indulge, laze and sunbathe after a busy stint in Rome, Milan or Florence. When approaching Como the A-lister way, aka the right way, there shouldn’t be so much doing as there is *not* doing.



Courtesy Photo

Villa d'Este's floating pool

[Villa d'Este](#) is the undisputed grand dame of the lake, as traditionally Italian as it gets, which is a very good thing (from \$550/night). It's all elegance, refinement and sophistication, here at the former royal residence, and even the most casual Aperol spritz in front of the 16th-century Renaissance structure feels somehow elevated. Its cerulean floating pool—the first in Europe—is a favorite hang for impeccably bikini-ed women and Speedo-ed Euro men, with swans swimming by and scullers zig-zagging the lake in the distance.

There are boats and standup paddle boards to tool around in, but many guests—which over the years have included Bruce Springsteen, Robert DeNiro, Chrissy Teigen, John Legend, Bette Davis, Alfred Hitchcock and Clark Gable—prefer to just lounge in the opulent setting. A trio of restaurants serves old-school fancy Italian standards, as well as lighter options at the casual Grill (which operates without the others' strict dress code), where the Clooneys bring friends for dinners of risotto, mozzarella with tomatoes and Champagne—always the same menu and same table, behind a tree and away from would-be prying eyes. The hotel's big annual event is the late May Concorso d'Eleganza Villa d'Este, which brings pristine vintage automobiles to its picturesque shores (John Krasinski and Emily Blunt, who were married in Lake Como in 2010, have attended).



Courtesy Photo

Vista Palazzo

Just this season—open in June—the town of Como was graced with its first-ever five-star hotel, the [Vista Palazzo Lago di Como](#) (from \$820/night), whose nine rooms and nine suites come with large picture windows (and views of the lake, naturally), hand-hewn indigenous wood floors, marble-clad bathrooms and rich Italian fabrics. The feel is very much a 21st-century take on the classic, luxurious terrazzo it indeed is, built in the 19th century and restored over a year and a half. The city's first and only rooftop restaurant is a surely a scene worth experiencing.



Courtesy Photo

Access to water from Suite Emilia

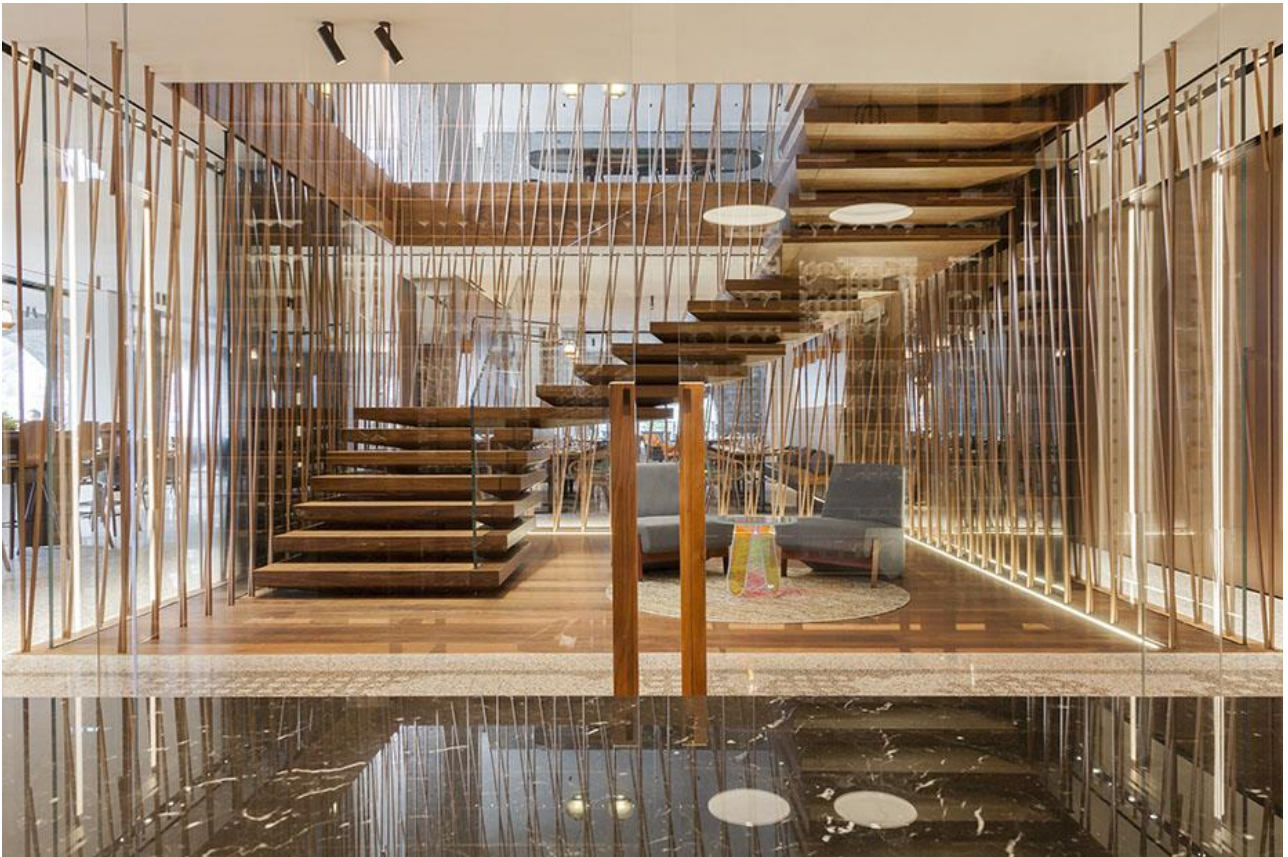
Reopening this season with a refreshed look and new culinary tours, vino experiences and private thermal spa access at San Pellegrino, is the iconic [Grand Hotel Tremezzo](#) (from \$529/night). The newest and perhaps most private suite in the property is Suite Emilia, in the same 18th-century villa as its spa. There, an excess of Italian marble, lake views from the balcony and opulent velvet wraps guests in a sense of pure luxury, not hurt by the fact it has its own private access to T Spa, with its indoor infinity pool, yoga studio, ice fountains and lake-view sauna.



Courtesy Photo

Villa Sola

The hotel also manages Villa Sola, the private villa owned by one of Lombardy's most noble families, giving A-listers the opportunity to act like royals in the opulent confines of a renovated historical home with intricate Italian flourishes and direct lake access.



Courtesy of Patricia Parinejad

Il Sereno stairs

Architecture and design aficionados like Blunt and Krasinski surely can appreciate both the old—ancient structures, pastel villas, early monuments—and the new, which comes in the form of the 30-room [Il Sereno](#), opened in 2016 (from \$885/night). Designed by the acclaimed Patricia Urquiola, it's the picture of contemporary lakeside chic, encompassing plenty of open-air spaces, including an enviable infinity pool with underwater speakers that seems to become one with the lake, plus rich native wood and marble used in beautifully modern ways. (Il Sereno's St. Barths sister is the celeb haven Le Sereno.)

They also have a Bond-like all-wood motorboat designed by Urquiola and built by the heritage Cantiere Ernesto Riva, for cruises around the lake and trips to Bellagio, and a Michelin-starred fine dining restaurant serving not only traditional prix fixe but vegetarian tasting menus that's still perfectly mellow in the way everything seems at the lake.



Courtesy Photo

Villa Pliniana

The Il Sereno family also added the nearby exclusive-use 16th-century [Villa Pliniana](#) to its collection recently, a place where Leonardo Da Vinci is said to have once lived, Napoleon is rumored to have played snooker, and Spotify CEO Daniel Ek was married, (his guests filling Il Sereno essentially the minute it opened). Mark Zuckerberg was there to watch as Chris Rock officiated the ceremony before a performance by Bruno Mars, wedding singer extraordinaire. It's equipped with its own glass-encased spa, trio of natural waterfalls, ballroom, Riva boats and helipad, but the property also appeals to history buffs, as its rich, traditional architecture—including elaborately decorated coffered ceilings and frescoes—takes you back in time.

The Clooneys have hosted Ed Norton with his wife, and Julia Roberts with her husband Danny Moder in Lake Como, where their go-to restaurants include [Harry's Bar](#) by the Cernobbio pier, [Il Gato Nero](#) for sunset gazing, and the romantic [La Darsena](#), overlooking the lake, where there are just a few prized tables outside (Access Italy can handle snagging one).

As much as a prime table is the place to be for a drawn-out lunch of gnocchi and wine, a private boat is the real ticket to living the Como life. It's the way to get around the little towns, hopping across the water for lunch or a shopping trip. Grand Hotel Tremezzo this season debuts their tailor-made Gozzo boat, a 60s-style fishing boat restyled by famed Italian designer and architect Venelli Kramer to be used exclusively for private fishing charters.

For more leisurely outings, cruise by [Villa Carlotta](#), which has Canova sculptures and peaceful botanical gardens. The legendary cursed island is worth a stop beside to pop bubbly and admire the view, which could even include snowcapped peaks. Access Italy's trips always include at least one dreamy day on the water, with a local guide to point out highlights and perhaps gain special access for private tours of storied villas. Another key time to lock in a glamorous vessel is for Fourth of July fireworks, where you might run into the Clooneys on theirs hanging out in front of Villa d'Este. Stars, they go for fireworks, too.